



Friday, September 21, 2007

Derailment of Chicago Commuter Train Caused By Ineffective Management and Oversight

The National Transportation Safety Board determined that the probable cause of the derailment of a Chicago commuter transit train in the summer of 2006 resulted from the Chicago Transit Authority's ineffective management and oversight of its track inspection and maintenance program and its system safety program, which resulted in unsafe track conditions.

On July 11, 2006, about 5:06 p.m. (CDT), the last car of northbound Chicago Transit Authority train number 220 derailed in the subway between Clark/Lake and Grand/Milwaukee stations in downtown Chicago. After the train came to a stop, electrical arcing between the last car and the 600-volt direct current third rail generated a significant amount of smoke, creating hazardous conditions.

Of the approximately 1,000 passengers on board the eight-car rapid transit train, 152 persons were treated and transported from the scene, including three firefighters and one CTA supervisor. The majority of injuries were due to smoke inhalation. There were no fatalities. Total damage exceeded one million dollars.

The Safety Board determined that the lateral forces generated as the train moved through a curve in the subway tunnel forced one rail outward, causing a wheel to drop into the interior section of the track bed. The weakness in the accident section of the rail was due to a series of corroded, worn, bent and broken fastener devices that were no longer securely anchoring the track to the half-ties on the tunnel floor.

In its final report, the Board stated that a deficient safety culture existed at the CTA that allowed the track infrastructure to deteriorate to an unsafe condition, which ultimately resulted in the derailment. In particular, the investigation found "a series of latent conditions and active failures at many levels throughout the CTA corporate structure, which is characteristic of an organizational accident."

As a result of the investigation, the Board approved a total of 14 safety recommendations, which will be issued to the Federal Transit Administration, the State of Illinois, the Regional Transportation Authority, the Chicago Transit Board, and the Chicago Transit Authority.

NTSB Issues Safety Recommendations

The NTSB called on state governments to do more to ensure the safety of travelers on their highways and waterways by enacting and enforcing laws to cut down on the thousands of people who are killed and injured every year.

In a public meeting on September 18, the Safety Board updated its list of Most Wanted Safety Improvements by the states, noting those instances where states have so far failed to implement the suggested safety enhancements. The list urges states to take dozens of actions to reduce the tragedies on the roads by requiring booster seats for young children; getting habitually drunk drivers off the road; and requiring graduated driver licensing, which includes teen passenger restrictions and wireless communications prohibitions for new drivers. The list also urges states to adopt laws that require young children to wear life jackets and boaters and renters of jet skis to get safety instruction.

The recommendations on the Most Wanted List asked for about 400 safety improvements in the states and territories. The board reviewed the status of the 232 actions by the states. Sufficient progress was made to close recommendations for seven states, and positive action was identified in 24 additional cases.

A week earlier, on September 11, the National Transportation Safety Board issued recommendations to states to require all motorcyclists and their passengers to wear Department of Transportation Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard (FMVSS) 218-compliant helmets.

Currently, only 20 states, the District of Columbia, and four territories have universal helmet laws requiring all riders to wear a helmet. Twenty-seven states and one territory have partial laws that require minors and/or passengers to wear such helmets. Three states have no helmet laws.

FMVSS 218-compliant helmets are designed with a hard outer shell, an impact-attenuating liner, and a retention system to protect the head, especially the brain, in a variety of impact scenarios.

Since 1997, motorcycle fatalities have increased 127 percent. Last year, 4,810 motorcyclists died in crashes, and accounted for more than 10 percent of all motor vehicle crash fatalities.

NTSB Launches to Alaska Air Tour Accident

On August 16, 2007, a de Havilland Beaver DHC-2 float plane operated by Seawind Aviation of Ketchikan as a part 135 air tour flight crashed near Traitor's Cove in Alaska. The crash resulted in five fatalities. The pilot, a tour guide and two passengers were severely injured. Investigators from the NTSB's Anchorage office were launched to Ketchikan; Clint Johnson is the Investigator-in-Charge and Scott Erickson is the Operations Group Chairman. Also participating in the on-scene efforts were staff from headquarters, Bill Bramble, Don Eick, Cindy Keegan and Paul Sledzick. Member Hersman, who happened to be visiting Alaska at the time the accident occurred, became the Member-on-scene. The accident gave her an up-front view of a regional aviation investigation in Alaska, which can present some interesting challenges because of terrain, weather, and difficult accessibility.

Scott Erickson examines an engine of the float plane



NTSB Assisting in Aircraft Accident Investigation in Thailand



Wreckage of One-Two Go Airways

The National Transportation Safety Board is assisting the government of Thailand in its investigation of the crash of a MD-82 in Phuket, Thailand on September 16.

The accident occurred at 4:00 p.m. local time when a One-Two Go Airways MD-82, 0G269 (Thailand registered), ran off the departure end of the runway while landing in heavy rain and strong winds. There were 123 passengers and five crew on board. Multiple fatalities and injuries were reported.

NTSB Chairman Mark V. Rosenker designated investigator Jill Andrews as the U.S. Accredited Representative. She was accompanied by representatives from the Federal Aviation Administration, Boeing, and Pratt & Whitney.

The Thailand government will release all information on the progress of the investigation.

NTSB Receives Two Honors From Boating Safety Association

National Transportation Safety Board Chairman Mark V. Rosenker received the NASBLA Award from the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators at the association's 48th annual meeting in Burlington, Vermont, on Friday, September 7, 2007.

The NASBLA Award is one of the organization's oldest and most distinguished awards and is given to a person or persons who have contributed to the mission of the organization and to the promotion of boating safety. Jeff Johnson, NASBLA's president and the Boating Law Administrator of Alaska, presented the award to the Chairman.

Chairman Rosenker has been a strong and staunch advocate of NASBLA's boating safety programs. Upon his appointment to the Board, Rosenker became the senior Board Member advocating for national recreational boating safety improvements, including the mandatory usage of personal flotation devices (PFDs) by children, mandatory recreational boating safety education for all recreational boaters, mandatory licensing for all boat operators, and safety instruction training for operators of rented personal watercraft.

Chairman Rosenker has promoted the recreational boating safety agenda through the Board's highly visible Most Wanted transportation safety improvements list, calling upon all states to adopt legislation and regulations governing boating safety. During his tenure on the Board, approximately half of the states has taken action.

NASBLA honored the NTSB with a second award at its 2007 annual meeting by bestowing the Bonner Award upon Bill Gossard of the NTSB's Safety Advocacy Division. The Bonner Award is named for Representative Herbert C. Bonner (NC), author of the 1958 Boating Safety Act. The award is presented to an individual who has who has successfully advocated life-saving boating safety initiatives.

Gossard has been a strong and relentless advocate for recreational boating safety improvements and a recognized leader in boating safety initiatives. He has assisted numerous Board Chairmen and Members in addressing, testifying and reporting on advances in recreational boating safety.



Chairman Rosenker Receiving the NASBLA Award from President Jeff Johnson

NTSB Speaks to GAASI

Vice Chairman Sumwalt, along with representatives from NTSB's Office of Aviation Safety, spoke to the 2007 General Aviation Air Safety Investigator's (GAASI) Workshop in Wichita, Kansas on September 19-20. GAASI, hosted by General Aviation Manufacturers Association's (GAMA) Accident Investigation Subcommittee, brings together general aviation air safety investigators to exchange and discuss industry best practices. Vice Chairman Sumwalt delivered the keynote address and said, "This workshop represents a critical element of the Safety Board's mission to share the knowledge gained from our investigations to prevent similar accidents."

Alex Lemishko, Assistant Deputy Director of Regional Operations, presented the 2007 State of the NTSB Regions, and Jim Silliman, Air Safety Investigator from NTSB's North Central Regional Office, discussed investigative techniques and safety issues associated with collisions between airplanes.

One-Year Anniversary of Comair 5191

Member Hersman returned to Lexington, Kentucky, to represent the NTSB at a public memorial service held on August 26, 2007, to remember the victims one year after the crash of Comair 5191. More than 1,600 people attended, including family members of the accident victims, Governor Fletcher, Mayor Newberry, and many community leaders. The family members of the accident victims recognized the emergency responders with a commemorative coin and a standing ovation at the service. The NTSB completed the accident investigation in July 2007, 11 months after the accident.

Chairman Rosenker Meets With Indonesian Delegation



The NTSB hosted a delegation from its counterpart agency in Indonesia, the National Transportation Safety Committee (NTSC-or KNKT in the Indonesian language) during the week of September 10. Pictured here with Chairman Rosenker is Chairman Tatang Kurinadi (R), Senior Investigator Franz Wenas (L) and other staff. Mr. Wenas is the Investigator-in-Charge of the Adam Air B737 accident investigation of January 2007. The group spent the week with the NTSB staff reviewing the results of flight recorders recently recovered from the depths of the Makassar off the coast of Indonesia.

Gaining...Momentum!!

Coming in October, the NTSB is transitioning from its legacy acquisition and financial applications (IDEAS PD and FFS) to a more robust, integrated, and modern acquisition and financial software package called Momentum. Momentum is the 'next generation' of FFS and IDEAS (it was developed by the same company) so it has a similar feel and look, but it's drastically improved. In addition to being web-based, Momentum offers e-mail notifications, a purchase card module, a contract-writing component, and a wide variety of reporting, querying, and tracking features.

NTSB is scheduled to "go live" with Momentum on October 9, 2007. In preparation for this date, NTSB accelerated the end of FY2007 to August 31, 2007 so that it could use September to conduct training for the various user groups and prepare the financial and contractual data for conversion.

Although standard requisition procedures have been temporarily stopped, urgent requirements can still be funded and awarded manually by CFO and the Acquisition Division. In addition, FY2008 Procurement Requests can be entered into Momentum beginning October 9, 2007.

While we acknowledge that any change of processes and software applications could have a few bumps along the way, we have tried to mitigate these through planning and preparation. However, we thank you in advance for your patience and understanding. If you have any questions, please contact Phyllis Gibert (x-6211) or Keith O'Neill (x-6102).

Enhancing Security For Employee Express and TSP Users

With identity theft so prevalent on the Internet, Employee Express has made security a top priority. Changes were implemented to enhance users' security. Beginning September 25, 2007, all users who access the Employee Express website will be required to create a complex password. Other security enhancements include displaying the last login date and time on the main menu, allowing the use of a login ID instead of the user's Social Security Number (SSN), and displaying security alert information automatically. No action is necessary on the part of employees until they access the website on or after September 25, 2007.

Similarly, the Thrift Savings Board is taking security measures as well. Be on the lookout for a mailing from the TSP with your new TSP account number. This account number will replace your Social Security Number as your primary ID for your TSP account. You will need to use this account number for any of the following:

- Filling out any TSP forms
- Using it with your TSP password when entering the Account Access section of the TSP Web Site
- Using it with your TSP Personal Identification Number (PIN) to gain access to your account through the Thirftline; or when sending TSP loan payments from your own funds, you will need to include this new account number on the loan coupon that accompanies your check or provide the account number to your on-line bill paying service.

